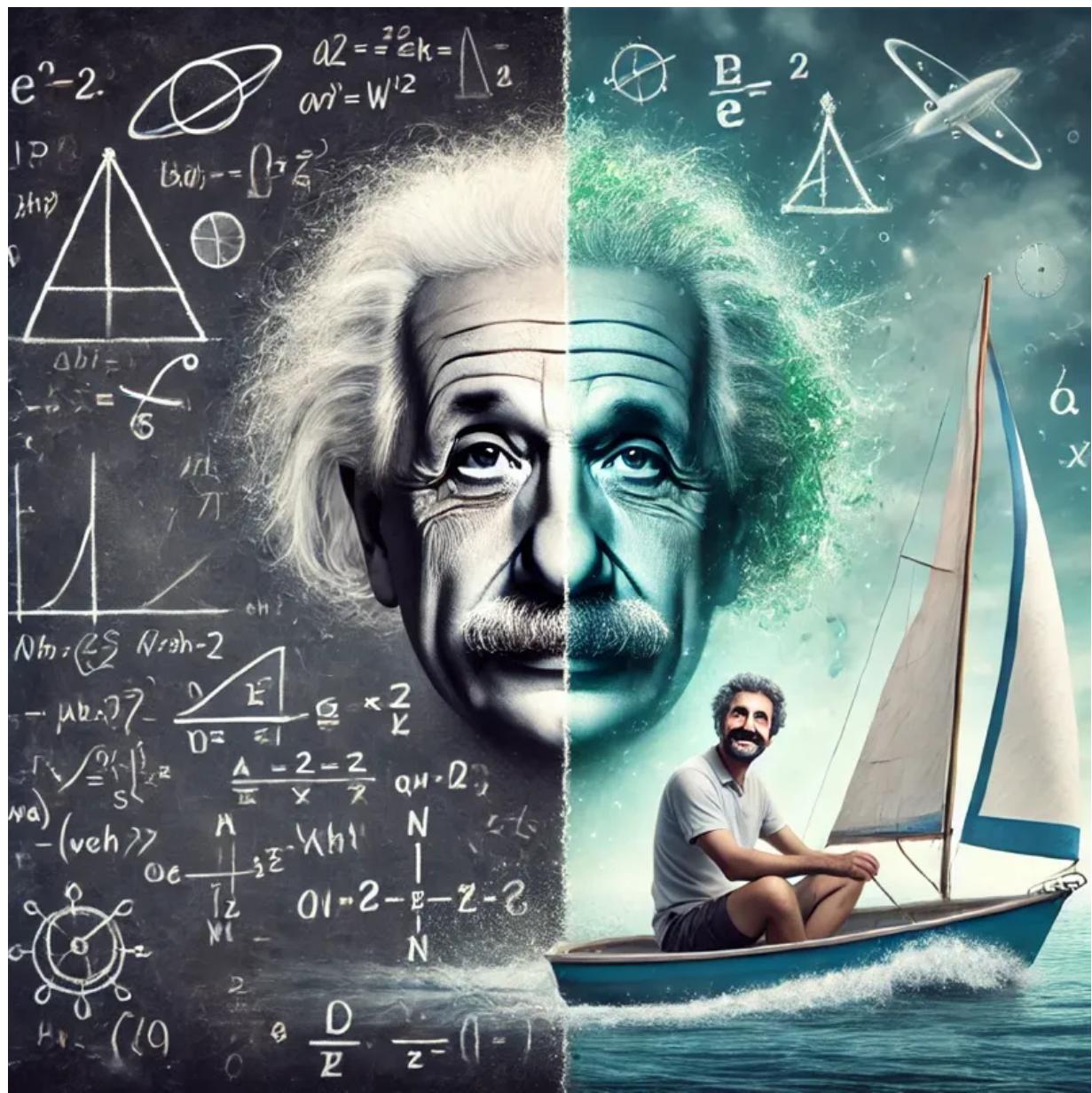


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and through...](#)



Dear Permission to be Powerful Reader,

I was a workaholic through and through. Eventually, it all caught up to me.

I kept telling my Copy Chief at Tony Robbins company that burnout would be the only way I would fail at this job.

I constantly monitored my energy levels and quickly cut loose anything or person that drained my energy.

I once went to the doctor while I was getting divorced and told him how fucked up my world was and how much stress I was dealing with. I was starting to get acid reflux from all the stress I was under. I thought I had a heart condition from the sharp pain in my chest.

I mentioned I was seeing a girl who was stressing me out.

He said, “Be selfish.”

Indeed, I was so glad I broke up with that girl when I did because I recognized that she disturbed my peace and drained my energy, which would impact my work.

I had finally smartened up about the impact my significant others have on my work.

There is a direct connection between how much my significant other bothers me and the quality of my work.

I learned this while my marriage was falling apart. I was too stressed out to work. I went from being the rising star in the company to being the bottom of the barrel.

I was hanging on to my job for dear life. At the same time, my ex was actively trying to inflict as much pain on me as possible. I had several nasty run-ins with my in-laws as well.

In retrospect, I realized that she wanted to punish me, and all of those arguments we had after I left were utterly pointless. They only served to cause me as much pain as possible on the way out.

There I was, trying to save my marriage one last time.

I should have cut her off immediately.

I've learned that your inner child always takes note of when you fail to protect them. This was one such time. I failed to protect my income, and therefore, I lost it.

This was the very last time I allowed myself to be taken on a roller coaster like that. When my ex decided to throw me out... I knew in the back of my mind that this would affect my job.

But I didn't have it clear enough that I didn't deserve that treatment.

I was like a dog getting its face rubbed in shit.

I was willfully enabling her to add insult to injury. To make myself an even bigger Martyr.

In my defense... this was the season when I was transitioning from Chauffeur to Mike Tyson. I was wobbling back and forth between the two mindsets.

I was in an unstable place mentally and emotionally.

After that, I decided to take Wellbutrin.

This is an antidepressant that also works as an ADHD treatment. I take it to protect my mood, so I never find myself in a place like that again. I learned a lot about burnout and how to manage it. I learned some exquisite lessons.

Every eighteen months or so, I get burnt out.

There's no need to tell you what happens.

You know.

Just getting out of bed can be a challenge.

You get a whole night's rest but are still tired the next day.

Nothing seems to restore your energy.

WTF is up with that?

Burnout is your body's way of saying you've gone too far.

It assumes you're not in touch with your inner child.

You've ignored their needs for so long; now your body's shutting down.

It's very easy to get sucked into a workaholic environment.

I once worked at a place where my Copy Chief went on a two-week vacation. Yet she was still present at every morning meeting while on vacation, with her kids in the background.

FUCK THAT COMPANY.

This is late-stage capitalism, y'all.

They want to work you to death like a beast of burden and then replace you with someone cheaper at the first opportunity.

Some companies are all too happy to exploit you for long hours and punish you for not being part of the cult.

Don't drink the Kool-Aid.

Late-stage capitalism is dog-eat-dog.

The rich exploit the poor.

The last thing I want to do is find more reasons for an employer to use me.

That's what buying into the workaholic company culture gets you.

I struggled with burnout because I worked too much. When I started as a freelance copywriter, I was dangerously inexperienced.

Like Abe Lincoln, I failed to the top.

To compensate for my lack of experience, I worked seven days a week for several months.

All work and no pay make Jack a dull boy. So, I was depressed.

Why was I so driven?

There were easier ways to make money.

That's the part that needed healing.

I had no understanding of that.

I just knew I was driven, and nothing would stop me.

As Master Hakuin says in Master Hakuin's Chant in Praise of Zazen:

- What is it we seek?

- What is it we lack?
- The cause of our suffering is **ego delusion**.

I'm a workaholic because I've used work as a coping strategy for growing up in a dysfunctional home. From a very young age, I've felt compelled to leave.

I was twelve, and I had no money. I realized that being financially dependent on my father kept me tied to him and tied to this miserable family dynamic.

I started thinking two or three steps ahead from the very beginning, which gave me a great advantage.

I've met more than a few trust fund babies with businesses that could only exist because of their wealth and connections, and I've spent a long time envying people like that.

But no more.

Why do I want to be successful?

What is success?

How do I even know when I get there?

I just made up an arbitrary bar that always seemed out of reach. It's a mental boobie trap. I thought I was striving for my goal and that I would get there someday, but all of that striving wasn't necessarily helping me get closer to my goal.

What do I mean?

Think about the productivity you lost the last time you were burnt out. Usually, when we consider how much productivity you gain when you are productive... the productivity you lose is never accounted for.

One huge workaholic myth is that you're getting more done because you're busy.

When you're always on the go... always in a rush... you get sloppy. At the Zen Center, there's order everywhere the eye can see. People do not do things in a rush.

What's more...

Consider the masterpieces created during the Renaissance, such as the Sistine Chapel and the Mona Lisa.

Do you think they were created in a rush?

NO.

Why do we believe doing things in a hurry means we are better off?

What if the opposite were true?

I like to think about Albert Einstein; he spent the morning unlocking the secrets to the universe, and in the afternoon... he'd go sailing.

If you ask me, that sounds like a hell of a win-win.

I got burnt out about six years ago, and by then, I had learned about burnout and workaholism, so this time, I took a different approach.

I only worked from 1 pm to 5 pm.

In the mornings, I'd go for a swim at the pool, or I'd smoke a joint at the beach and watch kitesurfing.

Bring an audiobook with me.

I'd get a massage once per week.

I stayed in therapy.

I started drawing and painting.

I knew that if burnout was my body's response from doing too much unrewarding activity, I needed to fill my life with rewarding activities—more fun.

Learning to swim was such a victory for me.

I grew up on an island, yet I can barely dog paddle.

I felt some unworthiness not being able to swim correctly.

And I'm an endurance athlete through and through.

Part of me wants to swim. I grew up at the beach.

After a few months, I got up to a mile in the pool.

Fantastic.

Everyone is on their grind, and I'm getting a deep tan and soothing my body.

Because I worked reduced hours, I learned to be incredibly efficient with my time.

I am known for being able to work VERY fast.

I organized my workflow perfectly, so there was no friction to slow me down in any part of my day.

Once I sat down, I didn't get up for anything — not even to pee.

And...

What did I discover?

I got close to the same amount of work done.

Eventually, I got into a 4-day work week.

I can't wait to bring those back.

They've done studies which showed that when given the option for a 4 day work week, productivity stayed the same.

It's a no-brainer: Would you work 20% harder to get 50% more vacation? That's an extra 50 days off per year.

I would.

Many others would, too.

That extra day usually went to taking care of myself and whatever errands I had to do, so on Saturday and Sunday, I was fully relaxed with no work to do. I got back to Monday feeling restored.

Those were the days.

Sadly, business hasn't been great. During tough times, I used my workaholism consciously because I wanted to slam my foot on the gas and accelerate my progress.

I read a book about workaholism wherein the author made a sobering point. He said that workaholism IS an addiction, and...

Like ALL addictions, it leads, ultimately, to death.

If you are a workaholic, consider this:

Workaholics are known to everyone around them as the person who's always busy. Who neglects their family.

You might be busting your ass to get ahead. And, for those marginal gains, your spouse may get fed up and finally decide to leave.

You could be thoroughly checked out at times when your children need you.

Every addiction creates consequences both for the addict and the people around them.

And, just like any other drug...

You will have to live with those consequences whether you want to, or not.

Being a workaholic, for me, was about escape. Escape from dealing with the problems in my relationship.

Escape from thinking about the gravity of my situation.

From looking at all the resentment and bitterness I'd accumulated over my life. From confronting the fact that I didn't like myself or my life.

It was fueled by my belief that I was not enough.

I'm not good enough to enjoy life. Success and fun cannot exist together. I need to acquire wealth to be worthy. I'll defer my joy and happiness until *someday*...

Happiness is always available to you right now.

At the Zen Center, we are taught to question our efforts to attain things.

- What is happening?
- Why are we always grasping?
- Why can't it ever stop?

All of that striving is unnecessary, and there are consequences you may sorely regret later on.

Once you quiet your mind, you suddenly become aware of all its inefficiencies.

After a Zazen meditation, I've described my mind as clean. That's how it feels. There's a pristine pureness after emptying the mind.

Instead of constantly working frantically, try working with an empty mind. Bring your full attention to your breath. Hold onto that sensation as you

work. Aligning yourself with that divine energy brings natural harmony and spontaneity.

We're not better off constantly looking into the future and reacting to our projections of it.

Once you let go of attaining things to feed your ego, you sever the bond that creates your suffering.

Today, I still consider myself to be a workaholic. But I made a compromise that pleases me greatly.

I work as little as possible.

I kid you not; at one point, I kept the lights on with a client who only wanted me to write one 8-line email daily.

But for those eight lines... Every word had to grab you like a fish on a hook.

Still, what took me all morning eventually got whittled to ten or twenty minutes.

I loved it because this was when I was getting divorced. All of that free time enabled me to run many races and do lots of dancing.

For a while there, I aimed to do as little work as possible, and then I'd sit in the park for a couple of hours, run, then dance.

Sadly, I don't get that privilege today. But I will someday. I can't wait to bring back my 4-day work week. It was the best.

Ultimately, the biggest lie I ever believed was that success would make me whole. It never could.

Because the only thing that ever made me enough... was me.

Until next time,



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anton Volney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Anton" on the left and "Volney" on the right. A horizontal line extends from the end of "Volney" to the right, and a diagonal line descends from the top of "Volney" towards the end of the horizontal line.

Dancer, Writer, Buddhist



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